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RECOGNITION OF THE ENGINEER

The leading article in *The Canadian Engineer* for this week is an address delivered by Fraser S. Keith, secretary of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, at Ottawa, in which an earnest plea is made calling upon all members of the profession, no matter how small a place they may fill, to do what they can to assure that so far as the future is concerned the engineer will bulk more largely than he has in the past, and be awarded a greater share of recognition. Slowly but surely it is beginning to dawn upon many that the present age belongs to the engineer.

During the past few years, and particularly since the outbreak of war, the real value of the engineer and his work has come to be recognized more distinctly and more intelligently than ever. The part he has played in the war has doubtless tended to throw the engineer and his work more prominently into the limelight.

More and more the engineer must assert himself and secure the measure of public appreciation which he rightly deserves. As a public servant, he is by reason of his habit of mind and his training, fully qualified to lead and direct public opinion.

One has only to consider at how many points the engineer touches the life of the community to get a fair conception of how important his position is. Think of the part he plays in the safeguarding of the public health by the design, construction and operation of sewage dis-

posal plants, water purification plants; his relation to the matter of production, transportation, and many other blessings.

His standing, or lack of standing, in the public mind is, in some measure at least, due to his own modesty. Is it not time that this condition was changed and the engineer, as an integral part of the community, assert himself and get the facts concerning his part in human development before the public by the use of the school, the press, the platform and literature?

ONE MAN CONTROL

There exists a latent danger due to abnormal efficiency when this distinguishes a chief, in that his staff are starved of opportunity. It is possible to discover firms solvent in business, where both initiative and decision rest absolutely with one man, who by assuming such autocratic prerogative, sets a bad example. Not that his staff has nothing to do, but that its efficiency is impaired because the chief is too able.

The best chiefs are those who contrive to build up an organization which, while their finger is always on the pulse of the undertaking, yet refrain from active interference in its more detailed routine. Even so, enough troubles and difficulties will come forward for solution to exercise the mentality of the responsible head.

Where the boss is the hardest worked man in the organization, it may safely be assumed that his overloaded day detracts from efficient control; he literally has no time, and he is often busy beyond reason upon the more trivial matters best delegated elsewhere.

Every man holding an executive post, however minor in character, has a right to some freedom of movement. His orbit may be very limited but it should be reasonably independent. His powers may be far from absolute, but to deprive him of responsibility by uncalled-for interference with detail, minimizes his value, undermines his power and authority, and saps his resource.

A safe rule is to set limits in a clear and definite manner, leaving detail to the subordinate on the understanding that failure involves penalty. It is under such conditions that first-class men do their best work, retain personal interest, and throw their entire mentality into the task in hand.

A good man likes to be consulted, and it is safe enough to assume that if afforded opportunity he will, when occasion arises, consult his chief. Yet, it is very difficult to put up with contradiction for its own sake and suffer revision upon minor matters. Too often, however, the man representing management is ill-advised enough deliberately to cause annoyance by such action.

It must be remembered that minor executives have a greater trouble to maintain their position than men higher up, and action which sacrifices their dignity may also sacrifice discipline. There are methods of finding fault which need not impair the position of the man one step only in rank.

It takes a big man to face big issues, and it takes the same type to refrain from unwarranted interference and petty criticism which cause resentment without furthering any good end.